

Ben Palmer statement to the Cabinet 19th July 2017

I would like to thank the cabinet for allowing me to make a statement in response to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Policy Scrutiny Panel's recent decision to endorse the emerging preferred approach to introduce a sandwich policy and lower the HMO threshold to 10%.

I am not only speaking on behalf of the students at the University of Bath but I am also speaking up for young people AND all who will be at detriment if this policy passes.

Firstly, it's important to point out that it is not just students that live in HMOs; young people, young professionals and other workers are also major demographics who live in these properties. Is it wise to prevent young professionals and workers from being able to live in Bath too? Considering that both locally and nationally, there is an aging population-limiting the amount of younger people in Bath means it will miss out on a range of benefits to both the economy and community.

Lowering the threshold to 10% is extreme and seems non-sensical when it is well over 10% of Bath's population who live in HMOs currently. HMOs are greatly needed in Bath with many jobs not providing enough money for workers to afford non-shared accommodation. The more affordable alternative of HMOs is the only way for many to live in such an expensive city.

Consequently, we fear that this policy is a knee-jerk reaction to some of the perceived negative impacts of students. Reading through reports, terms such as 'studentification' are hard to read. Not only is it hard to imagine such action and motive being applied towards other groups of people, but resolving complaints about students is not as easy as implementing a policy like this... student houses will still exist at current numbers; as such, these policies will not be solving the issue at hand.

Although limiting the development of more HMOs may seem like a method to cap student numbers, in reality, this holds no control over both universities' recruitment. The University is required to grow due to marketised Higher Education and they are now focussing on postgraduate recruitment. It is likely that both universities will continue to pour increasing numbers of students into Bath. Not only will that lead to students without accommodation, drop outs and other welfare concerns for students, such as isolation and increasing stress... But also, it will lead to more Purpose Built Student Accommodation; giving private developers a tighter grip over Bath, concentrating student numbers further and not to mention, being more expensive for students compared to HMOs. The council needs to exert greater control on the location, type and affordability of PBSAs. It is unfair to penalise students, *who are not just at university for personal development but to contribute more widely to society*, for the over-recruitment of universities. You cannot look towards our already crowded campus to house all new students because we are surrounded by; green belt and areas of outstanding natural beauty, restricting opportunities for development there.

Overall, it is particularly concerning to learn that the bulk of this consultation will take place over the summer months leading up to the next cabinet meeting in October, because a lot of students will not be in Bath. Considering that roughly 25% of Bath's population are students, it is only fair and right that we request you delay the consultation until the students are back and can truly be heard- especially as there was little to no acknowledgement of our previous consultation in the stakeholder engagement questions.

Students and young people are becoming increasingly engaged in politics, it is important that our view is heard, not to mention the many others who live in HMOs. So, I'm requesting you consider delaying the consultation and official voting on HMO policy until students return to Bath.

Thank you so much for your time.